

REMARKS

The Examiner is thanked for the careful examination of the application. New claim 36 has been added, and claim 18 has been amended. No other claims have been amended. In view of the remarks that follow, the Examiner is respectfully urged to reconsider and withdraw the outstanding rejections.

Lack of Completeness of Office Action:

In the last response, Applicants pointed out that it is not clear where Rooyakers teaches that the liquid-impermeable and liquid-permeable layers of sheet 190 are sealed together beyond the edge of the absorbent layer. Applicants specifically requested that the Examiner explain where such a teaching may be found in Rooyakers, in the event that the Examiner maintains the rejection based on Rooyakers. The Examiner did not address this issue, as required by the MPEP. In addition, the Examiner has again alleged that Rooyakers teaches that both the liquid-impermeable and liquid-permeable layers extend beyond the absorption body and are mutually joined together. (Page 3, Official Action dated November 30, 2006). Accordingly, Applicants again request that the Examiner specifically explain where such a teaching may be found in Rooyakers, or else withdraw the rejection.

Claim Objections:

Claim 18 was objected to because of the term "preferably". In response to the objection, claim 18 has been amended, and new claim 36 has been added to maintain the subject matter cancelled from claim 18.

Claim 20 is rejected under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, as allegedly being indefinite. The Examiner alleges that it is unclear how a liquid-permeable barrier can also be hydrophobic. However, the claim does not require a hydrophobic liquid-permeable material. It is the absorption body that has a liquid-permeable layer. The barrier is hydrophobic, not liquid-permeable.

Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the objection and rejection of claims 18 and 20.

Art Rejections:

Claims 1, 2, 6-14, 16-20, 23-28, and 34-35 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over USP 4,675,012, hereinafter Rooyakkers in view of USP 4,023,216, hereinafter Li.

Rooyakkers discloses a pouch 40 that is held in place by a typical male brief or undergarment 44 for incontinence protection. The pouch 40 is formed by enclosing a coform absorbent material between a backing sheet and a permeable body side sheet. See column 3, lines 39-42.

The Examiner alleges that Rooyakers discloses the claimed subject matter except that it does not disclose a liquid barrier applied on the liquid-permeable layer 192 at the narrower end section of the absorption body. For this deficiency, the Examiner alleges that Li teaches a portable urinal that contains a liquid-permeable absorbent material 18 disposed on the innermost surface of the urinal. The Examiner further alleges that Li teaches that the permeable material is arranged to prevent urine emitted by the user from leaking from the surface of the absorption body, citing column 3, lines 35 – 40.

However, the Examiner's analysis of Li is not correct. Li teaches a "urinal device" 10 that is made from a nonabsorbent material. Li includes a strip of absorbent material 18 at the **upper** rear edge of the device. After use, the absorbent material 18 is used to "blot the vulva dry". Column 3, lines 33 – 36.

In Li, the absorbent material 18 is the only absorbent material in the structure. However, as is clear from a careful reading of the reference, Li is **not** concerned with urine leaking from the absorbent material 18. Li is concerned with urine leaking from either the nonabsorbent device 10 or from the vulva. In fact, immediately after use, the absorbent material is flicked off and disposed. Column 3, lines 36 – 40.

There is no teaching or suggestion that the absorbent material 18 in Li could function as a liquid barrier. In fact, the absorbent material 18 is designed to dissolve upon prolonged exposure to water. Column 3, lines 25 – 28. Accordingly, the absorbent material 18 of Li is not equivalent to the claimed liquid barrier.

Applicants further submit that the art of female urinal devices is not analogous to the present invention, which relates to absorbent products for men. One seeking to improve an absorbent product would clearly not look to the female urinal device art. The Examiner has merely used the claims as a shopping list to find all of the claim features in various references without concern for finding the requisite motivation.

In addition, the claimed invention recites that the liquid barrier is on the liquid-permeable layer, at the narrower end section of the absorption body, so as to prevent urine emitted by the user from leaking from the surface of the absorption body towards the crotch region of the user (claim 1). Claim 26 recites that the liquid barrier is arranged at the narrow end section of the absorption body so as to prevent

urine emitted by the user from moving beyond the absorption body towards the crotch region of the user. Claim 34 recites that the liquid barrier is at the narrow end section of the absorption body or between the narrow end and the wide end of the absorption body, and is arranged either between the liquid-tight layer and the liquid-permeable layer or on the liquid-permeable layer. Applicants submit, that, even if the art of female urinal devices is analagous to the present invention (which it is not), the liquid barrier allegedly contemplated by the Examiner is arranged on an uppermost edge of the urinal device, not at the narrower end (i.e., lower end) section of the absorption body, so as to prevent urine emitted by the user from leaking from the surface of the absorption body towards the crotch region of the user (claim 1); not at the narrow end section of the absorption body so as to prevent urine emitted by the user from moving beyond the absorption body towards the crotch region of the user (claim 26); and not at the narrow end section of the absorption body or between the narrow end and the wide end of the absorption body, and not arranged either between the liquid-tight layer and the liquid-permeable layer or on the liquid-permeable layer (claim 34).

Accordingly, Applicants submit that the absorbent material 18 in Li identified by the Examiner does not overcome the deficiency of the Rooyakers reference, and that the rejection should be withdrawn.

The remaining claims have also been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Rooyakkers in view of Li and U.S. Patent No. 6,023,789, hereinafter Wilson. However, Wilson also does not overcome the deficiency of Rooyakkers and Li.

Accordingly, in view of the foregoing remarks, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the outstanding rejections.

To further define the protection to which applicants are entitled, new claim 36 has been added. Claim 36 is allowable for the reasons set forth above. Accordingly, the new claims are also patentable over the applied art.

In the event that there are any questions concerning this response, or the application in general, the Examiner is respectfully urged to telephone the undersigned attorney so that prosecution of the application may be expedited.

Respectfully submitted,

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